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ABSTRACT

English teachers have long pondered two problems: the promotion of worthwhile adventures in the study of literature; and the plight of students incarcerated in "study halls." The two problems can be alleviated by a common solution--quality literature selections on videotape with a VCR and television screen for student use only, located in the library/media center. Students build their literature background through videotapes of literature pieces in a relaxed manner on their own time and at their own pace. This personal viewing of significant pieces of literature is entitled Enrichment Viewing, and has been successful for three years at Sycamore High School in Illinois. The first step in establishing an Enrichment Viewing program at Sycamore was to contact the librarian/media director, who quickly agreed to the project. After research, the English Department chairperson and the librarian chose initial tapes, VCR, television monitor, and the type of anchoring equipment that would be needed. The total cost of initiating the program was $2,395. After obtaining the principal's approval, a grant request was submitted to the Sycamore Education Foundation. The Foundation, composed of civic and business leaders, makes funds available through grants to purchase enrichment materials that the school district could not otherwise afford. The request was approved quickly. Of course, not all students chose to participate in the program, but many did. As the years have passed, the original core of videos has been supplemented with other tapes, supporting various aspects of the English curriculum. (MM)

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Enrichment Viewing: A School and Community Collaboration on Literature

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Teachers of English have long pondered two problems: (1) the promotion of worthwhile adventures in the study of literature, and (2) the plight of students who are incarcerated in rooms often euphemistically referred to as "study halls," although the rooms are neither halls nor places where much studying occurs.

The two problems can be alleviated, at least in part, by a common solution—quality literature selections on videotape with a VCR and television screen for student use *only*, located in the library/media center. There students can build up their literature background through videotapes of literature pieces in a relaxed manner on their own time and at their own pace as well as escaping from their not-for-profit study halls. This personal viewing of significant pieces of literature is entitled Enrichment Viewing and has been successful over the last three years at Sycamore High School.

The concept of Enrichment Viewing is one of personal choice. A student can elect to go to the library/media center before or after school or during a study hall, request a literature tape, view it, have the viewing date recorded on the viewing card, and at the appropriate time turn in the viewing card to the English teacher for extra credit points. The titles, authors, and running time for each selection are printed on the viewing card provided by the teacher. The librarian signs the card on the appropriate line indicating that the viewing has taken place.

A key part of the program is the fact that the television monitor is for student use *only* and that a teacher cannot bring a class to the library to use the monitor; it is available to students on an individual basis at all times in the library/media center for Enrichment Viewing. Since the monitor is for student use only, frustration over wanting to use it is allayed, and the students have a sense of ownership in the program.

The first step in trying to establish the Enrichment Viewing program was to contact the librarian/media director, who is always open to new curriculum ideas. She quickly agreed to the concept and became actively involved in making plans to implement the program. She found an appropriate blank wall in the library/media center where a

television monitor could be permanently mounted on the wall with heavy brackets. The television screen and the viewing chairs were across the room and opposite the office of the librarian/media director, so tapes and behavior could be monitored. The VCR could be placed in an office close to the television screen, so the media assistants could play the tapes requested by the students.

After research, the English Department chairperson and the librarian agreed that the beginning core of the videotape library would be American short stories, which would be of interest to nearly every junior in the building since American literature is taught the junior year. A professionally prepared series of seventeen short stories by famous American authors enacted by television personalities currently performing on television was selected. All the tapes were in color, and most of them could be viewed in fifty minutes. In addition to choosing the initial tapes, the English Department chairperson and the librarian also chose the VCR, television monitor, and the type of anchoring equipment that would be needed. The total cost of initiating the program was $2,395.

After obtaining the principal's approval for the Enrichment Viewing Program, a request for a grant in the full amount of $2,395 was submitted by the chair of the English Department to the Sycamore Education Foundation.

Fortunately, Sycamore High School is in a community that has a group of civic and business leaders who have banded together to form the Sycamore Education Foundation. The Foundation makes funds available through grants to purchase enrichment materials, enrichment equipment, and enrichment programs that the school district could not otherwise afford to buy. The request for the grant for Enrichment Viewing was approved by the Foundation on March 10, 1986.

As soon as the grant was approved, the pre-selected materials were quickly ordered, and by April 1986 the juniors were active in the Enrichment Viewing Program.

Of course, not all students chose to engage in the program, but many did. Some students chose to view all seventeen short stories while others chose a few stories by their favorite authors; still others chose to see a few stories that they heard were "really good." ("Bernice Bobs Her Hair" and "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" were immediate favorites.) An interesting social phenomenon was the fact that some students formed themselves into a group during a certain period of the day and watched the tapes together. If a student in the group was absent for a day, the group would not view that day but

would wait for the absentee to return. This group seemed to experience a feeling of security and extended family from this viewing experience.

As the years have passed, the librarian/media director has been able to build upon this core of short stories when suitable short stories were offered at sale prices. These pieces are bought after consultation with individual English teachers and the chairperson of the English Department.

In addition to other short stories for the junior-level students, different types of tapes to support various aspects of the English curriculum have been purchased out of English or library/media center funds. For example, students in sophomore speech can view Martin Luther King giving his "I Have a Dream" speech, and students in junior literature can view a National Geographic film on bears before they study Faulkner's "The Bear." Freshmen literature students can use Enrichment Viewing for *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck as they read Buck's "The Good Deed" in class.

The freshmen can use Enrichment Viewing to see a story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that is different from the one in their literature books. Junior students in the community-bound writing classes can view a tape on the life of Walter Payton or Lee Iacocca as they prepare their research papers on careers. Sophomore students can see monks and hear the music of the Middle Ages on videotape in Enrichment Viewing as they study literature of the Middle Ages in class.

In fact, some of the Enrichment Viewing selections are so popular that a few students not enrolled in the classes to which the literature selections pertain will manipulate, so they can view the selections with a group of students who are eligible to view the materials; also, some students who view the materials one year enjoy coming back to the library the next year to view them again.

In January 1989, the Enrichment Viewing is still in operation and is still popular. The VCR, the television monitor, and the tapes remain in excellent condition, so the program has little maintenance cost. Obviously, in the future, equipment will have to be replaced, but not until literally hundreds of students have enriched their literature backgrounds through a generous donation from the community's Sycamore Education Foundation working as a team with the English Department and the school library/media center.